

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING

RECEIVED  
NORTON TOWN CLERK  
2023 NOV 27 AM 8:49

***Date of School Committee Meeting:*** Thursday, October 26, 2023

***Location:*** L. G. Nourse Elementary School Cafeteria

***Present:*** Committee Members: Chairperson Mrs. Sheri Cohen, Vice Chairperson Mr. Deniz Savas, Mr. Nick Schleicher, Mrs. Justine Callanan, and Mr. Dan Sheedy ***Also present:*** Superintendent of Schools Jennifer O'Neill, School Business Administrator Kristine Hadfield and Student Representatives Gabriela Kenaan and Antonio Romano

***Call to Order:*** Vice Chairperson Savas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Savas turned the meeting over to Chairperson Cohen at 6:07 p.m.

Vice Chairperson Savas announced that the meeting was being recorded by Norton Media and asked if anyone was recording to let the Committee know.

***Pledge of Allegiance***

***Vote to Approve Minutes of October 12, 2023 Open Session Meeting:***

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to approve Minutes of October 12, 2023 Open Session Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 3 - 0 - 1 Motion Carries

***Opening of School Remarks – Principal Thomas Higgins:***

Mr. Higgins addressed the Committee, reporting that the school year is off to a great start. He thanked his custodial team for their hard work over the summer completing multiple projects throughout the building while also hosting the Extended School Year and Acceleration Academy programs. The playground phase two is complete, fencing was installed, and the basketball hoops and swings were painted to match. Mr. Higgins extended thanks to the PTC for their work on the playground project.

In September, the LGN had a great opportunity to join author Peter H. Reynolds to celebrate International Dot Day which is broadcast all around the world. Mr. Reynolds visited the LGN last year, thanks to a NEED grant, and extended this invitation after his visit. The PTC funded buses, and approximately 220 students from grades 1-3 were able to attend the event at the Schubert Theatre in Boston. Mr. Higgins commended his teachers, staff and students for how well the experience went.

The LGN is doing a residency for Safe and Supportive Schools through the Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity. Their team presented at a faculty meeting and will be working with the LGN staff to shape the understanding of what it means to be a trauma sensitive school. This work ties well with existing SEL programming and IMTSS initiatives.

Daily video morning announcements continue and are posted on YouTube. They now incorporate the new LGN pledge which ties in with the PBIS mantra of being respectful, responsible, and safe. Student voices are added to the announcements in different ways like rhyming word puzzles. Emerging Multi Linguists (English Learners) are featured weekly doing the word of the week in multiple languages.

Traffic concerns surrounding arrival and dismissal procedures have been addressed. Arrival has been going much more smoothly while dismissal is still being worked on.

***Warrants:***

Mrs. Cohen reported that the following School Expense Warrants and School Payroll Warrants were reviewed and approved and are to be entered into the public record:

School Expense Warrant:  
October 12, 2023                      \$ 484,870.22

School Payroll Warrant:  
October 5, 2023                      \$1,224,137.79

***Student Representatives Update:***

Gabriela Kenaan and Antonio Romano updated the Committee on school activities as follows:

**JCS** – The JCS held their Unlikely Story Book Fair, and students left with so many wonderful new books. This weekend is the Trunk or Treat at the Yelle. All three elementary school parent boards are sponsoring the event. JCS will be participating in the Halloween parade on Sunday with a sea turtle float.

**HAY** - The PTO hosted the Scholastic Book Fair which was very successful and helped to refill the book vending machine with exciting book choices for students. The Trunk or Treat event will be held on Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, featuring 30 cars parked behind the Yelle for kids to visit and get candy. Students have been working with the Art and STEAM teachers, Mrs. Kabat and Mrs. Cashton, during the LLT block to create the display for Mr. Bielawa and Mr. Geoghegan's trunks.

**NHS** – The High School extends thanks to the Attleboro School-to-Career Partnership for Career Day. Twenty-two businesses came to present to the 10th grade students about possible careers. Spirit week has been a great success leading up to the revived Homecoming Dance on Saturday. Students have had Rock Your Crocs Day, Barbie Day, and Jersey Day so far this week. Next week is the annual Halloween Costume Contest for students and faculty. The Norton High School Drama Club announced they are putting on High School Musical with performances scheduled April 5<sup>th</sup> - 7th.

***Norton High School Special Olympics Banner Recognition – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill:***

Dr. O'Neill congratulated Norton High School on once again receiving National Banner recognition from Special Olympics North America, achieving national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy, and respect. Present to represent NHS were teachers Nicole Nunes, Bobby Portway, Jaime Mall, and Allyson Gingras as well as student Benson Chang,

President of the Best Buddies club. Each shared their involvement with the Best Buddies Program and unified activities. Best Buddies is the largest club at NHS with 120 members which equates to roughly one out of every six students. Two different membership levels accommodate all the students who want to be involved in this program. A big student leadership team coordinates activities for Best Buddies and solicits feedback for new activities. The focus day to day is on being advocates for inclusion. NHS is partnering with Special Olympics to do an adjunct Jolly Jaunt on December 2nd.

The program has grown so much over the last several years. NHS currently has two Unified Teams. The Committee discussed how this initiative is moving up to the college sector and commended NHS for their work. Ms. Russo, Coordinator of Special Education, commented on how much recognition Norton receives for their program from other districts. Norton is working to become a Unified District. There are three unified sports at NMS, and a program is starting at the LGN. Mr. Cerce, Director of Pupil Personnel, repeated that Norton stands out and is recognized by other districts for the tremendous student involvement and leadership as well as for the commitment of the staff to creating this type of inclusive environment. Both the administration and the committee thanked the group for their important work.

***Vote to Approve Middle School Trip to New York City:***

Mr. Goldstein, Assistant Principal, briefly updated the Committee on school activities reporting that the annual Halloween Activity night is on Friday, October 27<sup>th</sup> with an expected turnout of approximately 350 students. The middle school recently held a wear pink day to support breast cancer awareness

Mr. Ronnie Goldstein presented the Committee with information and a proposed schedule of events for a Grade 8 field trip to New York City for consideration and approval. The trip is planned for Friday, May 31, 2024.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve the Grade 8 Class Trip to New York City as presented

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

VOTE: 5 – 0 Motion Carries

***Discussion and Vote on Nurse Substitute Rate – Mrs. Kristine Hadfield:***

Following up from the October 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, Mrs. Hadfield presented additional information to the Committee regarding the proposed use of funds from the Comprehensive School Health Services grant to offset an increase in the nurse substitute rate. After mapping out the projected grant spending, the use of funds for substitute coverage would not negatively impact other programs or materials funded by the grant. The budget amount within the grant should be more than adequate to cover the projected substitute costs. The committee discussed the challenge of finding nurse substitutes, the merits of hourly vs daily rates, and referenced the provided comparable rates from other towns. The current grant will be funded for at least five to six more years.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve Increase to Substitute Nurse Rate to \$210 per day with Funding from the CSHS Grant

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 – 0 Motion Carries

***Discussion and Vote on Athletic Fields Fee Increase – Mrs. Kristine Hadfield:***

Mrs. Hadfield reviewed existing fees and a proposed \$25 increase per hour for field use to be effective in January 2024. In-town and not-for-profit organizations would still not incur a charge for field use unless custodial or supervision services were required. Custodial charges are currently charged when events are held inside. The charges to for-profit groups would offset not charging non-profit groups.

The Committee discussed the need for all groups using the fields to treat the spaces respectfully and clean up after themselves. The expectations for field use will be clearly communicated to groups and leagues, so they can hold athletes and families accountable. There is signage at the fields and track publicizing prohibited access or items on the fields and track.

The Committee also discussed the scheduling process for field use for town organizations and the process for renting to out of town organizations, including the possibility of stepped fee for longer duration events. A completed rental agreement with process will be shared with the Committee when it is finalized. The feedback regarding the Athletic Complex has been very positive. The District would like to continue to build on rentals to establish a strong fund for maintaining the complex.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve the Athletic Fields Fee Increase as presented

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 – 0 Motion Carries

***Capital Approval Discussion:***

Mr. Wade Lizotte, Director of Facilities, addressed the Committee with an update on the fire system project at Norton Middle School. The District obtained a quote from HELP for a hybrid system which would be a universal system allowing for parts and maintenance to be obtained from any vendor. The hybrid quote is for a total replacement of the existing system at a cost of \$153,844. The other existing quote for the project is from Siemens which is for a partial replacement of their proprietary equipment at a cost of \$127,000 excluding the cost of electrical work which is estimated at about \$8,000.

The Committee discussed both options and the potential timeline for the project. The additional cost for the hybrid proposal would have to be absorbed possibly by the facilities revolving account. Two additional quotes are required for the project. The Committee will table this discussion pending the receipt of those quotes and a proposal for how to offset any cost for a hybrid installation more than the capital allocation.

***Athletic Complex Outstanding Items:***

Dr. O'Neill addressed outstanding items in the Athletic Complex project, specifically, the pile of dirt that was retained with the intent of spreading on the pit field. Mr. Lizotte reviewed the timeline of the project as it related to the stockpiled soil and presented information from several contacts concerning the composition of the material in the pile. The Committee discussed the relative value of the material and identified a need for a policy regarding the disposal of surplus materials. Dr. O'Neill stated that a policy draft will be presented to the Committee including a meaningful way to determine the value of surplus materials.

***Other Business:***

None presented.

***Adjourn:***

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to adjourn meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

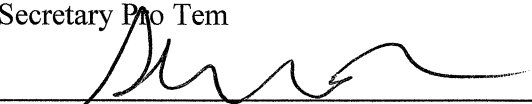
***Next Meeting Dates:***

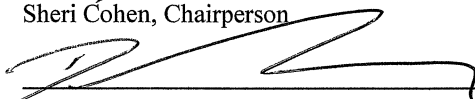
- Monday, November 13, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., in the NMS Library – joint with Finance Committee and Select Board
- Thursday, November 16, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., in the JCS Library


***Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:***


- Special Olympics National Banner Recognition
- Comparable Nurse Substitute Rates
- Athletic Fields Fee Update
- GALE Review of Project Materials and Condition of Excess Topsoil
- Current School Committee Policies
  - File: EC-Buildings and Grounds Management
  - File: EDC-Authorized Use of School-Owned Materials
  - File: FCB - Retirement of Facilities
  - File: GBEA- Staff Ethics / Conflict of Interest

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer O'Neill, Ed.D.  
Secretary Pro Tem

  
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Sheri Cohen, Chairperson

  
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Deniz Savas, Vice-Chairman

  
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Justine Callanan

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Nick Schleicher  
  
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Dan Sheedy